



## ***AOT in Action***

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

### **A Message from Director Sherry Henry:**

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Good afternoon,

This week, the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT), in collaboration with the Arizona Hospitality Research & Resource Center at Northern Arizona University, is launching an industry-wide **Sustainability Survey**.

During the past several years, many Arizona hotels, restaurants, visitor centers, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and attractions have been designated “environmentally friendly” through innovative sustainability programs such as the [“Certified Green”](#) program the Arizona Hotel & Lodging Association and the Arizona Department Environmental Quality launched this past winter.

Our Sustainability Survey will help us acquire baseline data on sustainable practices in Arizona’s travel and tourism industry as well as which industry organizations have participated in sustainable activities. It will also provide us with vital information to help us design future community outreach programs and marketing initiatives based on sustainability practices.

According to PhoCusWright research, more than four out of 10 U.S. travelers consider environmental impact to be important to them when planning their travel. Vacationers, as well as business travelers, are mindful of the impact they make on the natural resources of their destination city and are looking for eco-friendly travel options.

We want our visitors to understand that Arizona and our travel and tourism industry are deeply committed to preserving the environment and our state’s resources.

Look for the Sustainability Survey in your email inbox this week!

Have a great week.

Sherry Henry  
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

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## AOT News

### **Join us for the Arizona Tourism University Webinar: The Arizona Centennial**

The Arizona Office of Tourism is proud to present the **Arizona Tourism University Webinar** for The Arizona Centennial presentation. Karen Churchard, executive director of the Arizona Centennial Commission and the Arizona 2012 Centennial Foundation, will give an informative update on what events and projects are happening for the celebration of Arizona's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of statehood. Additionally, information will be provided on how communities can create their own Centennial Legacy Project or be Officially Sanctioned as an Arizona Centennial Event. This webinar is ***complimentary!***

#### **May 3 – Webinar**

2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

**Space is limited.**

Reserve your Webinar seat now at:

<https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/322383120>

### **Registration for the Governor's Conference on Tourism Now Open**

Registration is now open for the Governor's Conference on Tourism! This event is the premier educational and networking gathering for the travel and tourism industry. It is filled with practical ideas from the industry's top experts that you can take back to your community and immediately apply to your program of work. You'll get the latest hospitality and tourism information, network with more than 500 of your colleagues, learn about products and services from exhibiting sponsors, and get the latest industry research available. To register, visit [www.aztourismconference.com](http://www.aztourismconference.com).

### **Get your Summer Travel Packages and Deals on Value AZ.com**

AOT is gearing up to launch its successful summer, in-state campaign, **Value AZ** and we need your travel packages and deals. AOT, in partnership with statewide industry partners, will be launching the summer campaign in May. The campaign will showcase the amazing summer travel opportunities found throughout Arizona in addition to promoting the economic benefits of the travel and tourism industry. **To celebrate the Arizona Centennial, coming up February 14, 2012, we're asking that deals and packages supplied use that theme whenever possible.** If you want your travel package or deal promoted, this is your chance! Submissions must be received by April 30, 2011 to be considered for the Value AZ Campaign. Upload your travel deals and packages to the Travel Deals section of AOT's consumer Web site, <http://www.arizonaguide.com/arizona-tourism-partners>. You must first sign up to be a Travel Partner on [www.Arizonaguide.com](http://www.Arizonaguide.com) before you can list a travel package or deal. There is no charge to list a package on the Travel Deals section. If you have questions or need additional assistance, please contact Sandy Pederson at 602-364-3698 or via email at [spederson@azot.gov](mailto:spederson@azot.gov).

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## Upcoming Events & Activities

### Mexico Mini Mission

Dates: May 3 – 4

Location: Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico

### US Travel Association's International Pow Wow

Dates: May 21 – 25

Location: San Francisco, California

### Governor's Conference on Tourism

Dates: July 13-15

Location: Doubletree Paradise Valley Resort, Scottsdale

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## Industry News

### **U.S. News & World Report Names Grand Canyon National Park as a Best Vacation!**

The Grand Canyon National Park has been named as a “**Best Affordable Family Vacations**” and a “**Best Family Vacations**” in the USA in U.S. News & World Report's first-ever Best Vacations rankings, available online at <http://travel.usnews.com/>.

U.S. News created the Best Vacations rankings to compare the most popular travel spots against one another for the benefit of prospective travelers. The U.S. News Best Vacations rankings identify the best vacations based on an unbiased methodology. Two factors are combined to determine how each destination ranks. First is how strongly a collection of published travel writers recommend the destination. Second is how strongly U.S. News Travel website users (consumers) recommend the destination.

In total, 49 U.S. and 35 European destinations have been analyzed, but only a select few are identified as the best (our Best Vacations award winners). The winners, including the Grand Canyon National Park, are destinations with a record of outstanding traveler satisfaction.

“Each destination is unique and worth visiting,” said Chad Smolinski, Vice President of Rankings and Reviews at U.S. News & World Report. “These rankings help vacation planners find the best vacation spots for whatever type of vacation they have in mind.” For the full list of vacation rankings visit <http://travel.usnews.com/>.

### **SAVE the DATE: Arizona Highways Travel Show – May 14 & 15**

The Arizona Highways Travel Show provides an opportunity for communities, along with industry-related organizations and companies to promote their tourism destinations directly to potential customers in the Phoenix market.

More than 100 exhibitors participated in last year's event where more than 3,000 attendees were looking for travel locations and things to do in the summer and fall in Arizona.

The Arizona Highways Travel Show is your chance to market directly to this audience!

**Show Details:**

Arizona Highways Travel Show – Presented by KTVK- 3TV  
Phoenix Convention Center – Hall F  
May 14 & 15, 2011  
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

To register for a booth at the show:

[www.arizonahighwaystravelshow.com](http://www.arizonahighwaystravelshow.com)

For more information, contact:

Rich Ripley  
Arizona Highways Travel Show  
Presented by KTVK - 3TV  
480-838-9123  
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**STR Reports Q1 2011 Results**

The U.S. hotel industry reported increases in all three key performance metrics for first-quarter 2011 in year-over-year measurements, according to data from STR.

The industry's occupancy increased 5.7 percent to 54.9 percent, average daily rate rose 3.1 percent to US\$99.37, and revenue per available room was up 9.0 percent to US\$54.56.

"The industry's upward momentum continued in the first three months of 2011 with the strongest quarterly RevPAR growth since first-quarter 2006," said Bobby Bowers, senior VP at STR. "Supply growth continued its downward trajectory, demand growth remained healthy and ADR accounted for a greater percentage of the quarter's RevPAR increase. This marks the industry's fourth consecutive quarterly RevPAR gain, and we expect positive news will continue as 2011 unfolds."

Among the Top 25 Markets, Detroit, Michigan, was the only market to report a double-digit occupancy increase, rising 13.7 percent to 54.0 percent. New York, New York, fell 2.6 percent in occupancy to 70.1 percent, reporting the only occupancy decrease.

San Francisco/San Mateo, California, experienced the largest ADR increase, rising 13.0 percent to US\$143.29, followed by Oahu Island, Hawaii, with a 10.1-percent increase to US\$160.10. Norfolk-Virginia Beach, Virginia (-2.9 percent to US\$70.40), and Atlanta, Georgia (-2.0 percent to US\$83.69), reported the largest ADR decreases for the quarter.

Four markets achieved RevPAR increases of more than 15 percent: San Francisco/San Mateo (+22.1 percent to US\$100.52); Dallas, Texas (+19.8 percent to US\$55.01); Oahu Island (+19.1

percent to US\$131.58); and Detroit (+16.0 percent to US\$41.39). (*Hotel News Now.com, April 25*)

### **Federal Government Decides to Give Airline Passengers a Break**

The federal government's new airline rules won't prevent them from adding the hated fees -- more are expected this summer -- or make it any easier or quicker to get through security but most observers say this is generally good news for passengers.

"When the US Department of Transportation announced recently that compensation for getting bumped from an airline flight was going up, thanks to consumer advocates and the Obama administration's response to the demand for a passenger's bill of rights, the sound you heard was a collective cheer from travel hackers everywhere," wrote the Nashville Business Journal.

"Travelers, your day has come — finally. The Department of Transportation announced new passenger protection rules for airlines," wrote the Washington Post.

If an airline loses your luggage, it also now loses your baggage fee, which it will be required to reimburse. Airlines will also have to prominently disclose all fees — include those for checked bags, meals and upgraded seats — on their websites. And ticket agents will have to include all government taxes and fees when quoting fares.

Here are some questions and answers on the new rules:

Q: What's the impact on hidden fees? A: Airlines will be required to post all potential fees on their websites, including bags, meals, reservation changes and seating changes. Airlines and ticket agents must provide baggage fee information and include government taxes and fees in advertised prices. Supporters of the measure say this should help in consumers comparing fares which in the past have been misleading because they are not always prominently displayed.

Q: What about compensation for being bumped from a flight? A: Bumped passengers currently can get cash equal to their ticket value, to \$400, if the airline gets them to their desired US destination within one or two hours (as much as four hours for international flights). A longer delay means double the ticket price, to \$800. The new rule means double the ticket price, to \$650, for short delays and quadruple the ticket price, to \$1,300, for longer delays

Q: What's the impact on those irksomely long tarmac delays? A: Current rules that impose heavy fines on US airlines for tarmac delays will be extended to cover international flights and non-US carriers operating in the United States. For domestic US flights, the tarmac delay limit is three hours. For international flights, the limit will be four hours. Carriers will be required to provide trapped passengers with status updates at least every 30 minutes, plus food and water every two hours.

Q: How about when the airlines suddenly spring a delay? A: All airlines must offer passengers a flight status update service (email or text) to which they can subscribe. They must also notify passengers within 30 minutes of becoming aware of a situation that will delay, divert or cancel a flight. (*Travel Mole, April 26*)

### **Study Projects One Third of Travel Bookings Soon will be Online**

By the end of next year, travelers will book one third of the world's travel sales online, according to a new PhoCusWright report. Online leisure/unmanaged business travel bookings will grow twice as fast as the total market, to surpass US\$313 billion by 2012.

“PhoCusWright's Global Online Travel Overview Second Edition” compares four major regions – the US, Europe, Asia Pacific and Latin America -- revealing a global travel industry still recovering from the 2009 recession, which triggered a 13 percent decline in global sales,” the company says. PhoCusWright projects that global travel bookings will increase 6 percent in both 2011 and 2012, at which time the market will recover from 2009 losses.

Among the four regions studied, the US and Europe represent more than three fourths of all online sales, but less than two thirds of total travel sales. “As online travel bookings in the emerging markets of Asia Pacific and Latin America accelerate, combined share for Europe and the US will fall to 73 percent in 2012 and continue to decline thereafter,” the report says.

"As online penetration growth in the more mature US and European travel markets slows, travel companies are looking to the Asia-Pacific and Latin America regions for the next pot of gold," says Lorraine Sileo, vice president, research. She added: "In these emerging markets, macro-economic gains, increased travel and growing technology adoption will continue to fuel significant growth in online bookings." (*Travel Mole, April 26*)

### **Good News and Bad News about Rising Gas Prices**

With gas prices above \$4 in some states, some North American travelers are cancelling vacations and re-thinking summer travel plans, but on the other hand, the cost of gas could spur the growth of local tourism.

And some studies show that a majority of Americans will perhaps not even let gas prices change their minds.

“Despite high gas prices and increasing airfares, a new survey from HomeAway, Inc., finds the majority of Americans still plan to take a summer vacation, but will adjust their plans in light of rising costs,” says the group.

According to a special summer edition of the “HomeAway® Vacation Rental Marketplace Report,” 81 percent of respondents report they will take a vacation this summer. Of those who typically take a summer vacation each year, 38 percent will not change their vacation plans, saying increased gasoline prices and airfares will not affect their travel. The rest of those surveyed will alter travel plans in some way to counteract rising costs, including:

- Vacationing closer to home (27 percent)
- Cutting back on other travel expenses such as lodging, entertainment and dining out (20 percent)
- Vacationing for fewer days (13 percent)
- Making other changes to their travel plans (3 percent)

“This survey shows that people still plan to take a summer vacation, but they also need to find ways to combat the high costs of traveling to a destination,” said Brian Sharples, chief executive

officer of HomeAway. "For about half the price of a hotel, travelers can stay in a vacation rental home and reap additional savings from included kitchens, laundry facilities and on-site parking."

Most travel observers envision travelers tending to stay closer to home this summer, particularly if gas prices continue to escalate, but not all agree with the findings.

The rising trend of local tourism is already noticeable among the residents of Michigan, who are not traveling long distances due to the rise in fuel price and are spending their money predominately by traveling in the region itself, according to tourism officials.

Some areas and attractions are trying to use the gas prices to their advantage. Already, some tourist destinations are offering gas vouchers of as much as US\$50.

The situation has gotten the attention of the Obama administration.

"The attorney general's putting together a team whose job it will be to root out any cases of fraud or manipulation in the oil markets that might affect gas prices - and that includes the role of traders and speculators," President Barack Obama said at a town-hall meeting in Nevada. He added: "We are going to make sure that no one is taking advantage of the American people for their own short-term gain."

No evidence has yet surfaced of actual fraud or price manipulation in oil markets, reports the AP. Obama's remarks appeared, at least in part, as more of an attempt to assuage public anger over rising gasoline prices. Other presidents have launched similar investigations during times of rising oil prices as well. If gas were to go to US\$5 a gallon and stay there, some analysts think, it could erase the gains the economy is making and tip the nation back into recession, because Americans would sharply curtail spending elsewhere. (*Travel Mole, April 28*)

### **Phoenix Will Battle Tampa for 2015 Super Bowl**

The Super Bowl could be coming back to the Phoenix area in 2015. Arizona is a finalist for the 2015 Super Bowl along with Tampa, Fla., according to the Arizona Cardinals and the Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee.

The National Football League will decide in October whether to land Super Bowl XLIX in Glendale at University of Phoenix Stadium, or in Florida. Both the Phoenix and Tampa markets have hosted the Super Bowl before.

"We are delighted to receive the terrific news that Arizona is one of two finalists for the 2015 Super Bowl," said Mike Kennedy, Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee Chairman. "As I have always said, we are in the Super Bowl business and believe we have the best facilities and most hospitable venue in the country."

The two markets will pitch their cases to the NFL in August.

"We are excited to get this opportunity from the NFL and look forward to showing them once again Arizona is ready to host this premiere international event in 2015," said Kennedy.

The Valley hosted the 1996 Super Bowl in Tempe and 2008's game in Glendale. Tampa hosted the game in 1991, 2001 and 2009. The latter was when the Cardinals made their first and only Super Bowl appearance. Both markets have been bidding other recent Super Bowls but lost out to Dallas, Indianapolis, New Orleans and New York. The 2015 game is the next one to be determined by the NFL. (*Phoenix Business Journal*, April 28)

### **Havasupai Canyon is Open to Visitors Effective May 1, 2011**

Please be aware that Havasu Canyon is a fragile environment and is subject to flash floods. Some areas in the canyon are OFF-LIMITS to visitors due to continuing repair work or unstable ground condition. Immediate closure of the canyon is possible at any given time during your visit. Visitors to Havasu Canyon assume all risks while in the canyon and should come prepared.

Havasupai Cafe is currently closed for renovation. Food and beverages including fresh fruits and frozen entrees are available at the Havasupai Trading Post. Microwave ovens are available for patrons use. Group catering is also available. Please contact the Havasupai Trading Post at 928 448 2951 or email [htstore0@havasupai-nsn.gov](mailto:htstore0@havasupai-nsn.gov).

Lodging and camping facilities are available. Please be advised that fees are subject to changes and is final only on arrival. Please contact the Havasupai Tourist Office at 928-448-2121/2141/2180 for entry and camping permits or email [httourism0@havasupai-nsn.gov](mailto:httourism0@havasupai-nsn.gov) and the Havasupai Lodge at 928-448-2111/2101 for lodge reservation or email [htlodge0@havasupai-nsn.gov](mailto:htlodge0@havasupai-nsn.gov). The Havasupai Tourist Office and the Havasupai Lodge can make arrangement for packing mules service.



Visit [www.ArizonaGuide.com](http://www.ArizonaGuide.com) to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

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